



Developing Your Program

Part I

Overview

Developing a parent engagement policy or plan does not have to be a complex activity. There are many ways and tools to accomplish the task. However the plan you ultimately develop should be a true reflection of your school's/district's commitment to collaborate with all parents and families to increase the academic achievement and success of all children.

In developing your school's or district's plan consider these six critical steps:

1. **Evaluate your current status.** Evaluate where you are today relative to your parent engagement efforts, programs and activities. How well are we doing? By getting a sense of where you are today and where you would like to be in the future, will help you to develop a vision for parent engagement.
2. **Develop a statement of purpose.** The statement of purpose articulates your school's commitment to and a vision for parent engagement.
3. **Formulate Goals and Strategies.** The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) recommends that schools and districts base their decisions on scientifically-based research and address the NCLB/ESEA requirements. Your goals and strategies should include activities that meet the specific needs of your school and parent community.

In addition when formulating goals and strategies ensure that you are taking your school improvement process into consideration so that both plan whether separated or combined clearly outline comprehensive goals and strategies for parent engagement.

4. **Action Steps/responsibilities.** Establish a year-long schedule for how the plan will be accomplished, with action steps, timelines and people responsible.
5. **Review your performance.** At the end of the year it is important to obtain feedback regarding the parent engagement plan both from an internal and external perspective – parents and community.
6. **Evaluate your parent engagement plan.** Examine your student achievement results to determine if and how the parent engagement plan positively impacted student achievement.

Strategy

One possible strategy is to begin by conducting a self-assessment that would provide information from various levels and departments of your school or district. Consider the following:

Where Are We Regarding:	How Do We Start?	How Do We Use The Information We Obtain?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication to and from parents 2. Parents as learning partners 3. Parent Volunteering levels of participation 4. Schools being resources for parents 5. Parents as partners in decision making 6. Policies and process to formally involve parents 7. Parents perspectives about us in all these areas 8. Students perspectives about us in all these areas 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct comprehensive staff assessment/survey 2. Conduct parent only survey 3. Conduct a student only survey 4. Conduct focus groups that include staff, student and parents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand where you are 2. Establish priorities to begin your plan development process 3. Guide district to achieve goals

Additional Information & Resources

Sample Self-Assessment Surveys

1. [PDF] Parent Involvement in Every School "P-I-E-S" Manual, pages 91-93:
http://www.esc16.net/users/0020/docs/Parent%20Involvement%20in%20Every%20School%20Manual_new.pdf
2. Assessing Existing Parent Involvement – A checklist for different levels of involvement
 Page 33-41, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Parent_Involvement_Part_1_12-16-04_111426_7.pdf

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Part II – Tips for Educators and School Staff

Overview

There are many ways to develop your program as indicated in the previous section. However, if your school and/or district currently has a parent engagement plan, take a look at the following recommendations and suggested actions steps that could potentially assist you to enhance your plan and/or activities.⁴⁰

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION STEPS
Recognize that all parents, regardless of income, education level, or cultural background, are involved in their students' learning and want them to do well in school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine assumptions your assumptions about families. Assume that with support and training, they can help their students achieve. Avoid blaming parents and look for ways to learn from them. Recognize that parents are a valuable resource for information about their child's unique needs and abilities.
Embrace a philosophy of partnerships and be willing to share power with families. Make sure that parents, your colleagues, and community members understand that the responsibility for the students' educational development is a collaborative enterprise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize family and community engagement as a key component of your school improvement plan. Find creative and workable ways to involve families and the community in planning, establishing policy and making decisions.
Develop the capacity of school staff to work with families and community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help all staff recognize the advantages of school, family and community connections. Host professional development trainings on parent engagement. These trainings should address the advantages of school, family, and community connections as well as how to work with diverse families.
Work with families to build their social and political connections. Encourage parents to communicate with each other to increase their awareness and understanding of the education process, school issues, and their student's needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create parent education classes to improve families' political knowledge and skills. Address a variety of topics, specifically education policy. Illustrate to families that they can and do make a difference in their child's life.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION STEPS
<p>Link family and community engagement efforts to your students' learning. Parent engagement is most effective when it has the direct goal of improving student achievement. When planning family and community involvement activities, begin with the academic improvements your students need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement family learning/homework programs that engage parents in working with their children to develop specific academic skills. ▪ Give families information about how your school works – schedule, rules, syllabus, curriculum, etc. Make sure that this information is provided to families who are new to the school system. • When evaluating your parent engagement events and programs, compare your students' achievement data with parent involvement rates. Use this information to make any necessary improvements.
<p>Build strong connections between your classroom, school and community organizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community organizations to offer programs that encourage reading, writing and studying during evenings, weekends and summer. • Open the school to community agencies that can offer services to families through a family resource center. ▪ Collaborate with community organizations and action groups to reach families.
<p>Develop trusting and respectful relationships with families and community members. Acknowledge all contributions by parents to their child's education as meaningful and valuable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respect cultural and class differences within the school community. Begin by learning about the various cultures/communities and their perceptions of school. ▪ Adopt effective practices of outreach to families, such as personal contact and home visits. ▪ Connect new families with experienced parents from your class as well as with community resources.